Variances between Published Editions of the Pentagon Papers

There are three published editions of the Pentagon Papers. None is complete. These notes are intended as an aid to the reader of the Gravel Edition, in understanding how it differs from the "original" Study and from the other published editions of the Papers.

The Gravel Edition contains the entire contents of the documents which Senator Mike Gravel entered into the record of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds of June 29, 1971. This material does not embody the entire Defense Department study, but only those portions of it which had come into the Senator's possession at that time. The full Defense Department study contained about 7800 pages, while the material entered into the Senate record, and reprinted in the Gravel Edition, consisted of about 4100 pages of manuscript.

The New York Times Edition of the Pentagon Papers, published by Bantam Books and Quadrangle Press, is in actuality a summary prepared by the staff of that newspaper, along with a selection of documents from the Papers and elsewhere. The Times appears to have had access to a nearly complete version of the study (only the last section, on diplomatic negotiations, appears to have been absent from the material they used), but this edition does not contain verbatim reprints of the study, as do the other two editions.

While the Gravel Edition was on the presses, the Defense Department released its declassified version of the Pentagon Papers. This was subsequently published, in limited quantity, by the Government Printing Office. From this GPO Edition it is possible to infer what is omitted from the Gravel Edition.

No table of contents was included with the Gravel material. (Even the official title of the Defense Department study, "United States-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967", was not known to us at the time the Gravel Edition went to press.) Thus, in preparing the Gravel Edition for publication, a chapter

sequence was chosen which provided a convenient, nearly-chronological four-volume format. With the publication of the GPO Edition, the original table of contents became available, and it was then possible to determine how complete the Gravel Edition was and what the "proper" order should be. Table I shows the table of contents of the original study and indicates the sections that are in the Gravel Edition and where they are located.

As Table I shows, several sections describing the pre-1960 period are missing from the Gravel Edition. In addition, only about one-fourth of the documents included with the original study were available with the Gravel material.

On the other hand, the version released by the Defense Department, and published by GPO, had a number of pages and individual sentences deleted. Much of this material is included in the Gravel Edition; it appears on the pages shown in Table II.

The Defense Department has not provided any public rationale for its deletions (although they appear to be more politically embarrassing than militarily sensitive). The omitted items include communications from foreign governments, especially during the 1954 Geneva Conference; narrative material and documents demonstrating American complicity in the coup that toppled Diem; narrative materials describing clandestine naval and air attacks on North Vietnam; descriptions of political weakness and corruption in South Vietnam and of American involvement in South Vietnamese governmental processes; assertions of American willingness to use nuclear weapons if China intervened; descriptions of the decision, in 1964, to initiate the bombing of Laos, with the knowledge and consent of the Laotian government; assessments of Soviet actions and of their likely reactions to American moves; descriptions of the

use of Canadian and other intermediaries with the North Vietnamese; information on the presence and location of North Vietnamese units in South Vietnam, and acknowledgement that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong electronic communications had been intercepted.

The Gravel Edition includes 110 documents from the Johnson Administration which were not included with the original study. (Although the GPO Edition says, in Book 12, that "a separate volume covers the Johnson Administration", in fact that volume of documents was never assembled; time ran out and the project had to be completed by January, 1969.) Along with its account of the Pentagon study, the New York Times included a number of documents which did not appear in the Gravel material; these were reprinted in the Gravel Edition and their source identified.

Some of the manuscript pages in the Gravel material were indistinct, notably at the tops and bottoms of pages (where the classification markings must have originally appeared). This problem was especially severe in Chapter III.2 and, to some extent, Chapter III.3. The illegible or missing material was either bridged by removing the entire sentence in which it appeared, when it was evident that no substantive material would be lost by this procedure, or the omission was indicated by a bracketed statement. A comparison with the GPO Edition shows that no serious omission resulted, but those interested in historical accuracy may wish to refer to the GPO Edition as a cross-check. In addition, the odd-numbered pages (!) were missing from the Gravel material dealing with the Tonkin Gulf episode (pp. III.182-190). Since this material is likely to be of interest to many readers, that section is reprinted in this volume, with the missing material drawn from the GPO Edition.